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STUDIES IN THE PSALTER¹

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VII. With Chronicles we cross the border line which separates the uncanonical from the canonical books. The date of the work is usually assigned to the early Greek period, or 300 B.C. But recent investigations have tended to show that Chronicles, like most of the historical books in the Bible, is a compilation, and that much of the material found in it dates from a somewhat earlier period, while a smaller portion is due to later accretion. In general it is safe to say that the book reflects the situation which developed during the latter part of the Persian period and the early part of the Greek period (400-250 B.C.). The book purports to give the history of the pre-exilic period, but, as a matter of fact, it does not tell us what actually occurred in earlier days, but only what the author thought must have occurred. The author belongs to that unimaginative class of persons who suppose that what is believed and practiced in their own day has always been believed and practiced. The Chronicles is the first example that has come down to us of the Midrash literature, or the reformulation and embellishment of ancient literature for homiletical purposes. In dealing with the evidence of the Chronicler we must always remember that we are dealing with a preacher rather than with a historian, with a man who, like most of the writers of his day, was unable to distinguish between historical fact and accepted doctrine.

Little light is thrown upon our subject by an examination of the Chronicler's relationship to the Canon. When he wrote, the third group was of course incomplete, as his own work was afterward to belong to it. It is probable also that the group of Prophets was even less defined than in the time of Ben Sira. It is a rather significant fact in this connection that the Chronicler preferably uses other sources than our Books of Kings in retelling the history

¹ Continued from the February issue of the *Biblical World*.

of the pre-exilic period.² For the Chronicler the Law was the primary Canon. It is the influence of the Law that is largely responsible for his historical reconstructions. Accordingly, from the time of the Chronicler backward, the history of the Psalter separates from the history of the Canon, and we are shut up to an examination of the Chronicler's use of individual psalms or collections of psalms. In this connection there are three passages of special importance:

The *first passage* is II Chron. 29:30. According to it the Levites are to sing praises to Jehovah with the words of David and Asaph the seer. The allusion can be to nothing else than to a collection of Davidic and Asaphite psalms. This is the first reference to such psalms in history.³

In the *second passage* (II Chron. 6:41-42) the Chronicler cites Ps. 132:8-10 (in our collection grouped with the Pilgrim psalms) and places it in the mouth of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. There can be no serious question of the dependence of the Chronicler upon the psalm at this point.⁴

The Chronicler's readiness to adorn his account of ancient religious services by incorporating into his description quotations of psalms is even more strikingly exhibited in the *third passage*. The Chronicler is describing the removal of the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Zion. He elaborates the account found in II Sam., chap. 6, in his own peculiar fashion. He describes at length the song service led by a Levitical choir and quotes the song supposed to have been sung. On examination it turns out to be a composite production made up of certain fragments of psalms:

16: 8-22	Ps. 105:1-15
16: 23-33	Ps. 96:2-13 ^a
16: 34	Ps. 106:1
16: 35	Ps. 106:47
16: 36	Ps. 106:48

² Whether our Books of Kings are *directly* used at all is uncertain. It is possible that they may have been used only through the medium of the main source which the Chronicler seems to rely upon.

³ The original connection of vss. 25-30 with what precedes has been disputed. Benzinger regards them as one of the later accretions to the work of the Chronicler, but it is safer critically and historically to see in it the work of the Chronicler himself (cf. Kittel and Curtis, *ad loc.*)

⁴ Duhm's attempt to prove the contrary, upon which Benzinger relies, implies an impossible exegesis of the psalm.

It is generally admitted that the passage in Chronicles is dependent upon the Psalms. Ps. 105 is a great review of the history of Israel. To this review vss. 1-15 form the appropriate introduction. They are thus organically related to the rest of the psalm. On the other hand they have nothing to do with the situation to which the Chronicler refers them or with Ps. 96 with which he combines them. The dependence of the Chronicler upon Pss. 105 and 96 may therefore be regarded as proved. This will raise the presumption that vss. 34-36 are also dependent upon Ps. 106. If the parallelism existed only between vs. 34 and Ps. 106:1, this would not be so evident, for we have to do here with a current doxology.⁵ But when vss. 35 and 36 are also almost identical with Ps. 106:47, 48, it is altogether probable that the Chronicler was led to repeat the current doxology in this particular passage because he had Ps. 106 in mind.

It has been inferred from the free way in which the Chronicler combined and rearranged various psalms that he had no clear conception of the canonicity of the Psalter. It is probable that no formulated theory of its canonicity did exist in his day, but the Chronicler's treatment of the Psalms is no evidence of this. A hymnbook, even though it were regarded as canonical, naturally lends itself to rearrangement for liturgical and literary purposes. Of more importance is the fact that the Chronicler ascribes one of these psalms to Solomon and the other (apparently) to David or Asaph and this, too, in spite of the absence of titles to these psalms in the Hebrew.⁶ The bearing of this fact on the trustworthiness of the Davidic tradition will be discussed hereafter.

Of most importance in the present connection is the observation that the dependence of the Chronicler upon the Psalter is not limited, as in the case of Ben Sira, to subtle allusions, but extends to lengthy quotations. The fact that the Chronicler, one hundred years before Ben Sira, made such clear use of the Psalms confirms the deductions already drawn from the testimony of Ben Sira himself as to the *existence* of the Psalter in this early period. But we may go farther and argue, as was done in the case of Ben Sira, that the particular psalms used by the Chronicler imply,

⁵ Cf. Pss. 107:1; 118:1; 136:1.

⁶ In the LXX Ps. 96 is ascribed to David.

though they do not stringently prove, the existence of the great bulk of the psalms in the Psalter. We saw that Ps. 136 was a very late psalm. Hence the dependence of the hymn in Ecclesiasticus upon this psalm carried with it impliedly the existence of the numerous psalms which were earlier than Ps. 136. Similarly Pss. 96, 105, 106, 132 admittedly belong to the later psalms of the Psalter. Hence, proved dependence upon these again implies the existence of those numerous psalms which belong to earlier strata, and again the deductions made from Ben Sira's testimony as to the *size* of the Psalter are corroborated. But may we not go farther still and find evidence in the Chronicler's work that he actually knew our Psalter in its fivefold form? Here the relationship of I Chron. 16:36 to Ps. 106:48 must be re-examined. Ps. 106:48 is a doxology at the end of Book IV. If Books I, II, and III be compared, they are found to conclude with similar doxologies. It is admitted on all hands that the first three doxologies do not belong to the psalms which preceded them, but are added to mark the close of the respective books. They belong to the redaction of the Psalter. In other words, they have a literary rather than a liturgical function. Analogy would suggest that the doxology at the end of Book IV also belongs to the redaction and hence has a literary function. Since the Chronicler uses this doxology at 16:36 it has been plausibly argued that he was already acquainted with the Psalter in its present fivefold form.⁷ This conclusion would be of such fundamental importance if it could be substantiated that it must be examined with some detail.

Three objections have been urged against it: 1. It is claimed that, after all, Ps. 106:48 depends upon I Chron. 16:36 and not the latter passage upon the former. This objection may be dismissed without hesitation. As we have already seen, the admitted dependence of the Chronicler upon Pss. 105 and 96 raises the strongest sort of presumption that he depends upon Ps. 106. This presumption is strengthened by the very significant change in tenses in I Chron. 16:36 as compared with Ps. 106:48. That which is a

⁷ Yet even on this supposition, incorporation of later psalms into the framework of the fivefold Psalter is conceivable.

liturgical note in the psalm ("And let all the people say Amen, Hallelujah") is a historical statement in Chronicles ("And all the people said Amen and praised Jehovah"). There is unquestionably adaptation here. But it is far more natural to hold that the Chronicler, who has adapted the other psalms cited in vss. 8-35 to a historical situation, has adapted this doxology to the same situation, than that the statement of a historical fact should be transformed into a liturgical note. The Chronicler is describing a religious service in past history as it was accustomed to be celebrated in his own day. He therefore makes the people say *Amen* in accordance with the liturgical prescriptions with which he was familiar. This view accords with all that we know of the Chronicler's method of reading the customs of his own day into the past.

2. The second objection is more formidable. It is claimed that I Chron. 16:8-36 does not belong to the original work of the Chronicler but is a much later insertion. Hence, even if the dependence of this passage upon the psalms is granted, this implies nothing as to the existence or form of the Psalter in the Chronicler's day. Now a careful study of the narrative in I Chron., chaps. 15 and 16, reveals the fact that it is not homogeneous. At least vss. 19-24a have every appearance of being a later accretion. But if the narrative is tampered with here, it may be tampered with elsewhere. Vss. 8-36 have been regarded as a second instance of interpolation for the following reasons: (a) If these verses are omitted, vs. 37 is found to attach directly to vss. 5-7; (b) Vs. 7, strictly speaking, does not necessarily introduce the following quotations; (c) In vss. 8-36 there is no allusion to the event at which these psalms are said to have been sung, and vs. 35 is actually incompatible with this event; (d) The final argument is a singular one. If, it is urged, these psalms had already been attributed to Asaph or David by the Chronicler, they would not have remained anonymous in the Psalter. The fact that they are anonymous shows that this section in the Chronicler follows the Psalter—and hence must be interpolated! The first three arguments are of little force. The fact that vs. 37 resumes vss. 5-7 does not prove that vss. 8-36 are an interpolation. After the

citations have been given, of course the narrative must be resumed. Again, the jolting connection between vss. 7 and 8 and the lack of correspondence between the psalms and the occasion on which they are said to have been sung are of little significance, when the Chronicler's looseness of style and lack of historical imagination are remembered. To infer interpolation from lack of historical appropriateness is a strange argument to employ in connection with this writer. It would have force only if it could be shown that the Chronicler was himself sensitive to historical proprieties. As a matter of fact he was as likely to violate them as any interpolator.

The last argument can be understood only when it is first assumed that either the psalms including their titles or, at least, the titles are later than the Chronicler. On the basis of this assumption we would expect to find, it is claimed, a reflection of the Chronicler's view of the origin of these psalms in the titles, if vss. 8-36 are the Chronicler's own work. At the present point in our investigation this argument is a pure *petitio principii*. It assumes something that remains to be proved. But waving the fallacy in it (it is not always safe to subject historical investigations to the demands of formal logic) it is still unconvincing, for it further assumes that those who were responsible for the titles to the Psalms would have *necessarily* been influenced by the Chronicler's statements. This is a conjecture, not an argument. As a matter of fact such traditions had no inherent value. They were, as we shall see, largely irresponsible guesses. A conceit of the Chronicler would not necessarily have weight with other men. The argument, further, overreaches itself. Even if the passage were interpolated in Chronicles there is no reason why its views might not have worked themselves into the titles as easily as it is assumed that they would have done if the passage had been original.⁸ Accordingly, the success of the attempt to avoid the conclusion that the Chronicler knew our fivefold division of the Psalter, by attacking the genuineness of vss. 8-36, must be regarded as doubtful.⁹

⁸ Cf. Kittel, *Bücher der Chronik*, 70.

⁹ The above objections to the genuineness of vss. 8-36 have been handed down from the time of Reuss until they have acquired the sacredness of some venerable

3. But the third objection which has been urged against this conclusion seems to me to be decisive. In brief, it is that the doxology at Ps. 106:48 has a liturgical function and not a literary function. In other words, its relationship is primarily with the Psalm and not with Book IV. If this can be established it is evident that no inference can be drawn from the Chronicler's acquaintance with this doxology as to his acquaintance with the fivefold form of the Psalter.

If the doxology at the end of Book IV is compared with the doxologies at the end of the other books it will be found that they are substantially identical. At first thought it would seem that the purpose of the doxology was the same in all four cases, namely, to mark the close of the several books. But within the doxology of Book IV is a phrase ("And let all the people say") which differentiates it from all the other doxologies by giving it a distinctly liturgical significance.¹⁰ It is to be sung. But under what condition is it to be sung? It cannot be sung as the concluding doxology of the book, but only of the psalm which precedes. Its connection is with the psalm, not with the book. This view of its connection is confirmed when Ps. 106 is studied in its relationship

formula (cf. Cornill's *Introduction*, 407, and Duhm, *Psalmen*, 249). Criticism must be careful not to become in its turn a mechanical tradition. There is another argument, however, for a later date of I Chron. 16:8-36, which I have not observed elsewhere. If I Chron. 16:36 depends upon Ps. 106:48 it implies that the Hallel already stood at the end of the psalm. In the November article we saw that according to the LXX the Hallels regularly preceded the psalms rather than followed them and this gave a more logical arrangement. If the more logical arrangement is at the same time the earlier arrangement, then it would indeed seem necessary to regard I Chron. 16:36 as a later interpolation as it would reflect the later custom of singing the Hallels at the end. But the present datum at once presses the question home whether after all we have the right to speak of the Greek usage as the relatively earlier usage. We saw that it could not have been the original usage. It is probable that the Greek and Hebrew texts at this point only betray different liturgical customs, and to argue that the Greek custom is earlier and that I Chron. 16:36 which reflects the Hebrew custom is therefore an interpolation seems very precarious. It is interesting to note that the LXX of I Chron. 16:36 agrees with the Hebrew. Since the LXX translation of Chronicles was known to Eupolemus (158 B.C.) the custom of singing final Hallels must have already existed in his day. Compare also the final Hallels at B. S. 51:12¹⁰.

¹⁰ The phrase is not a liturgical gloss but a part of the doxology as the post-Deuteronomic passage, Deut. 27:15, clearly indicates. Compare also Neh. 5:13; 8:6, and Num. 5:22 for the amen-response.

to Pss. 105 and 107. These three psalms in their present form are a trilogy of Hallel's closely connected together. At first sight all three psalms appear to be reviews of Israel's history and thanksgivings to God for his mercies as exhibited in that history. But when the psalms are more carefully studied this interpretation is only borne out so far as Ps. 105 is concerned. In Ps. 105 the history of the nation is painted in rainbow colors. It is the fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham and there is no confession of national sin which might have made the covenant void. Thus the spirit of Ps. 105 is properly the spirit of a Hallel psalm. In Ps. 106, on the contrary, the colors are all somber. The mercies of God are in spite of the national sins. The present generation confesses its own sin in identifying itself with the generation of the Exodus (vs. 6) and prays for forgiveness and redemption (vs. 47). Vs. 6 is really the theme and vs. 47 the goal of the psalm. The spirit of Ps. 106 is the spirit of confession and entreaty rather than the spirit of praise. With the body of the psalm the introductory praises (vss. 1-5) are quite inconsistent. It is therefore altogether probable that these verses are a later liturgical accretion. This conjecture becomes still more probable when Ps. 107 is examined. If this psalm is read in the light of vss. 1-3 it might be thought that the subject of it was praise for national deliverance. But if vss. 4-32 are examined by themselves this interpretation is not substantiated. Instead of national deliverances we have deliverances from certain typical dangers that might befall anyone, namely, from the dangers of caravan travel (vss. 4-9), of imprisonment (vss. 10-16), of sickness (vss. 17-22), of the sea (vss. 23-32). In vss. 33-43 there is a miscellaneous collection of causes for gratitude which has nothing to do either with the interesting thought or poetical structure of what precedes. But vss. 1-3, which tend to give to vss. 4-32 a nationalistic significance, are intimately connected with Ps. 106 (cf. 106:1 and 47 especially). The conclusion seems inevitable. Pss. 105, 106, and 107 originally had nothing to do with each other. Their present connection, which is acknowledged by all scholars, is due to redaction, i.e., to the addition of vss. 1-5 to Ps. 106 and of vss. 1-3 and 33-43 to Ps. 107.

If we now ask what is the relationship of Ps. 106:48, it is most easily understood as a part of this Hallel redaction. If it is once admitted that the connection between Pss. 106 and 107 is artificial, it is clear that these psalms must have been joined together *before* the present division of the books was recognized. In other words, the Hallel redaction of Pss. 105-7 must have preceded the present separation of these psalms into different books, which tends to destroy the very relation which it was the purpose of the redaction to establish. But if Pss. 105-7 were once redacted into a group of Hallel's it is difficult to see how the final redactor of the Psalter ever came to make a book division just at this point and mark it with a doxology. On the other hand, when it is recollected that the doxology at Ps. 106:48 has a distinctly liturgical function, the presumption is overwhelmingly in favor of the view that it belonged to the liturgical Hallel redaction of Pss. 105-7, rather than to the literary redaction of the Psalter. If this view be granted, we can at once find an answer to the question raised at the end of the third article in this series as to why a book-division was made just at this point in spite of the very strong topical reasons against it. If the doxology already stood at Ps. 106:48 when this group of Hallel's was adopted into the Psalter, when once the desire arose to create a fivefold division of the Psalter corresponding to the Pentateuch, the doxology afforded a convenient opportunity to make the division at this point. The present division between Books IV and V is thus seen to be purely accidental and arbitrary. We cannot argue from it to a separate history of the psalms in these two books.¹¹

¹¹ On the relationship of the various doxologies. This must remain a matter of conjecture. That the final redactor of the Psalter is not responsible for all of them has just been made probable by the above discussion in connection with Book IV. It is also probable in view of the fact that the doxology at the end of Book II precedes the final historical notice and that no doxology is placed at the end of Book V. It is sometimes said that Ps. 150 is itself a doxology, and therefore a closing doxology is not needed. But if the final redactor had felt the need of marking the close of the previous books with doxologies it is not probable that he would have omitted it in the case of Book V. It is therefore altogether probable that the doxologies at the end of Books I, II, and III were, like the Books themselves, due to different hands. That the doxologies of Books I and III are so much like the doxology of Book IV is probably due to the fact that this doxology was in current use in the liturgies (cf. Book IV), and was therefore naturally adopted for literary purposes also (Books I and III).

Accordingly, while it is altogether probable that the Chronicler knew of Davidic and Asaphite psalms and that his collection of psalms was a large one, we are not at liberty to infer that he knew our present collection in its fivefold form.



Melozzo da Forlì

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